



Jennifer Scibana - In the Grace of God

Jennifer Scibana and her date, Joe, closed the bar with Joe's best friend on December 4, 2011. They were all intoxicated. Jen climbed into the backseat of his friend's two-door Chevrolet Monte Carlo, despite Joe insisting that she should sit up front. The friend slid behind the wheel to drive them home. After all, they weren't going very far.

The driver was speeding and lost control. The car struck a telephone pole before launching into a violent tailspin that ejected Jennifer through the back window. She landed on her face, suffering a broken nose, severe scrapes, several broken ribs and two broken arms. The initial impact had broken her leg in three different places, her toe and torn her meniscus.

She doesn't remember any of it. The last thing she remembers is telling Joe to take the front seat. She woke up in MetroHealth's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) a week later.

Jennifer spent a month at MetroHealth before being moved to a skilled nursing facility, where she stayed for three months. After the second month, her insurance company stopped covering her medical bills, citing lack of progress. Jennifer needed full-time care. She could bear no weight, nor could she push herself as her arms were still healing. She elected private pay for the third month

before her aunt could move in with her to her first-floor apartment in Mayfield Village.

For six months, Jennifer was confined to a wheelchair, her leg stretched out in front of her by an external fixation device for stabilization.

This wasn't supposed to happen. Especially now. Recently separated from her husband, she was just starting to set a new course for herself. Jennifer was determined to reclaim her life.

She started physical therapy as soon as she could. For seven months, she'd spend four days a week at her cousin's clinic. Once she could bear weight, she started driving and joined a gym. Her rehabilitation became her full-time job. She'd go to the gym four to five times a week for two hours at a time. She continues to exercise as a way to stave off stiffness, pain and swelling but she considers herself lucky to not have chronic pain. As an instructor and stylist, Jennifer is on her feet most of the day. She returned to work at a salon in July of 2012.

Turns out, 2012 was a year of change. Jennifer's parents and brother moved to California. She finalized her divorce. She felt as though she could cut all ties with her past – well, all but Bruno, a stuffed lion hand puppet that a niece had given to her while she was in the hospital, and Joe. They had not been dating seriously at the time of the accident. But sharing that experience created a bond. It was one that would grow over the years.

Normal never returned for Jennifer. It was all different. So she decided to go with it, to create a completely new life for a completely new her. She quit her job and moved to Cleveland's West Side. She bought a salon in Tremont.

And in March 2017 Jennifer and Joe celebrated the first birthday of son Jaxon, their first child.

Says Jennifer: “You can’t let the trauma define you. You have to let it go, move past it. It doesn’t define you.”

